

**LIFE** PRESENTS

# "HAVE YOU HEARD?"

THE STORY OF WARTIME RUMORS

Suggested by ..... STEPHEN EARLY

Directed by ..... ALFRED HITCHCOCK

Photographed by ..... ELIOT ELISOFFON

From Stephen Early, secretary to President Roosevelt, recently came the suggestion that LIFE tell a picture story of wartime rumors and the damage they are liable to do. In accordance with this request, the Editors asked Alfred Hitchcock, famed Hollywood movie director, to produce such a story, with LIFE Photographer Eliot Elisoffon as his cameraman. When Mr. Hitchcock graciously agreed, a script was prepared, the director picked his characters from the ranks of movie professionals and LIFE's Los Angeles staff, and shooting commenced in Hollywood.

*Have You Heard?*, which LIFE presents on the following six pages, is the result of their cooperation in photo-dramatization. A simple sexless story, it shows how patriotic but talkative Americans pass along information, true or false, until finally deadly damage is done to their country's war effort. One false rumor is silenced by a man of goodwill who later is unwittingly responsible for starting a true rumor which ends in a great catastrophe. Moral: Keep your mouth shut.

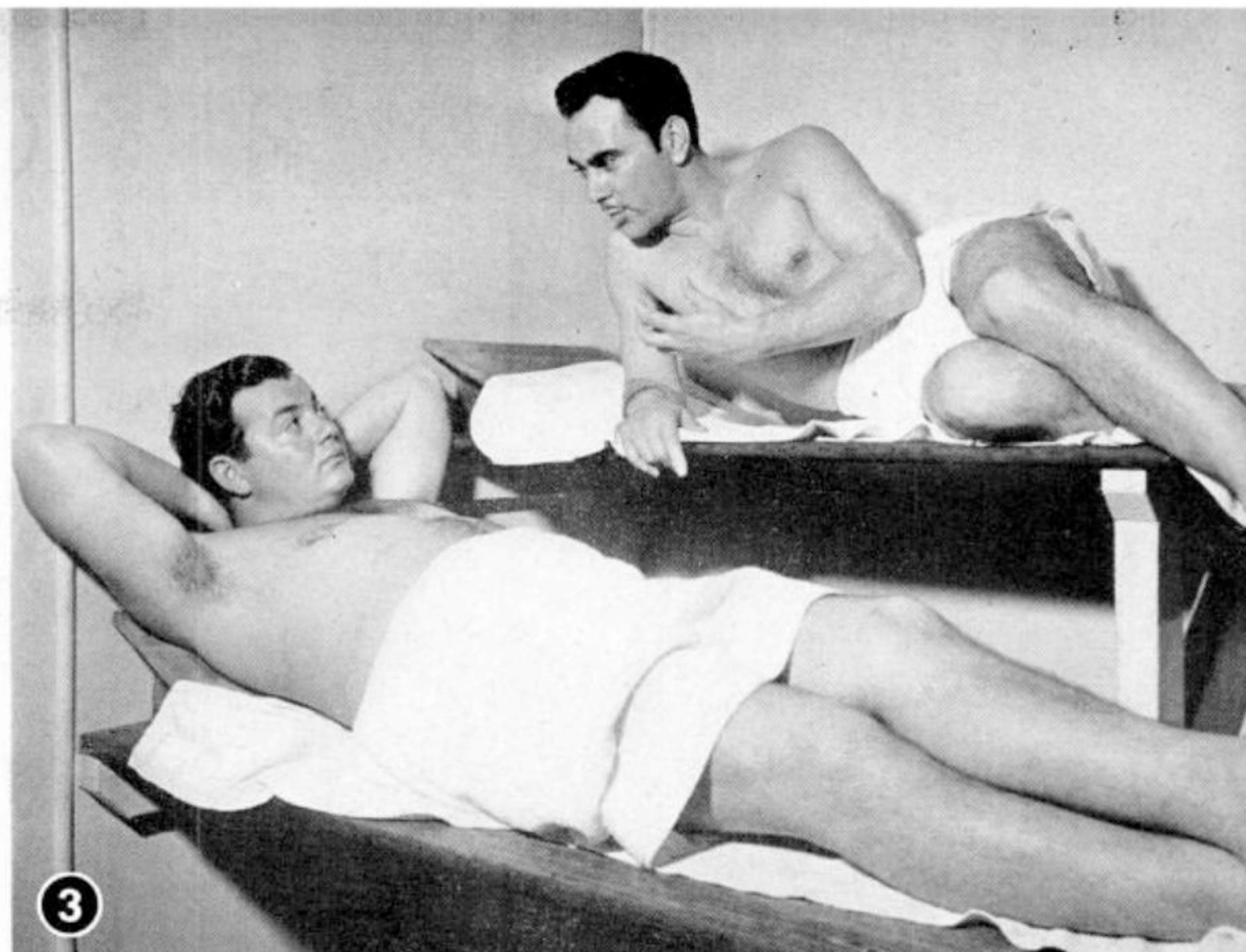


A church congregation in the city of Zenith hears its minister offer a special prayer for "our boys in the armed services who even now may be sailing for such far places as Alaska."





**Bussing home** from Sunday services, the blonde girl in the funny hat tells her friend: "I'm sure now. Those Zenith soldiers are sailing for Alaska. He didn't ask us to pray last Sunday, so they must be leaving this week." In bus seat behind them, a musician leans forward to overhear their conversation.



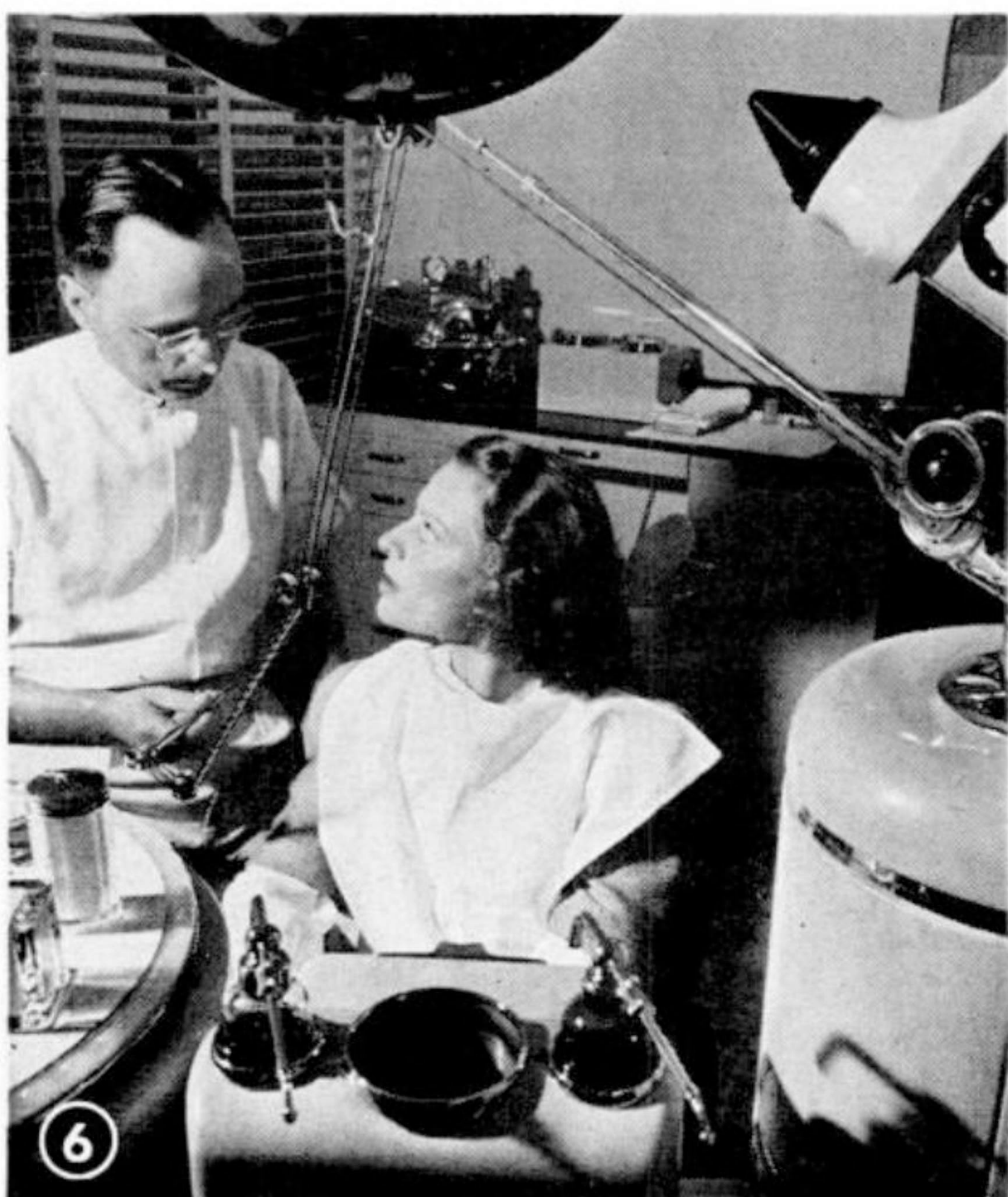
**At Zenith's Steam Palace**, the bus-riding violinist confides to a local hardware salesman: "Have you heard? Troopships are sailing to Alaska this week. They say thousands of boys are going up there. Preachers are already praying for them around the city."



**At a Zenith restaurant** that Sunday evening the hardware salesman entertains some friends. "Have you heard?" he asks. "No? Well, we are sending thousands of boys up to Alaska. Their troopship sails on Wednesday or Thursday, I understand, and they'll be convoyed by six destroyers on their trip up there."



**One of the dinner guests**, a gas-station proprietor with a liking for bow ties, chats with his customers next morning: "Have you heard about the large convoy of troopships going to Alaska? Friend of mine who really knows says they're leaving Wednesday night."



**At the dentist's**, pretty dinner companion of the hardware salesman passes on the secret news. "They're sailing Thursday afternoon. It means a new front. The man who told me knows one of the officers."



**"There's going to be a blackout** so that no one will know when the troopships go out Friday midnight for Alaska," confides another young woman, who was at the salesman's dinner, to her roommate.



**"I never listen to rumors,"** replies a Zenith haberdasher to customer who repeats troopship story. "You shouldn't spread such talk. Nothing but rumors!"

**BUT** \_\_\_\_\_  
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A dozen tropical shirts are ordered by a young Army lieutenant in the store of the Zenith haberdasher the next evening just before closing time. But the sleeves are too long and

will have to be altered. The lieutenant says: "If you can't get them done and delivered to my hotel by 9 o'clock Friday night, never mind the order. I won't be able to pay for them

if I've gone when they're delivered. Understand?" The haberdasher says he understands. But he muses to himself: "Tropical shirts. This young fellow must be headed for Australia."



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An hour late for dinner, the haberdasher arrives home to find his wife and children already finishing their meal. He explains his tardiness: "Last customer held me up at the store. A lieu-

tenant. Couldn't be helped. He took a dozen tropical shirts. He had to have the sleeves altered. I guess he's been ordered to Australia. I've got to get his order done by 9 o'clock Friday

night. I suppose he's sailing on a troopship Friday midnight and that's why he's in such a rush." The haberdasher's son Christopher, a little pitcher with big ears, takes in every word.





**Playing with "the gang"** down the block the next afternoon, Christopher seeks to impress his older friends: "Gee, my dad's making shirts for almost the whole Army. He sold lots to soldiers going to Australia to fight. He's working now so the troopships can sail Friday midnight."



**Bursting with excitement**, Christopher's older pal arrives home to find his mother's afternoon bridge club in session. "You know what, Mom? Christopher's father's making shirts for a whole boatload of soldiers. He says they're all sailing for Australia at midnight next Friday."



**Next morning**, the plumpish member of the bridge club makes her regular weekly visit to one of Zenith's beauty parlors. An ardent gossip, she can hardly wait to get out of the drier and

tell her friend and the manicurist the "news" she heard the day before. "My dear, have you heard about the troopships sailing for Australia? Yes, my dear, they're going out at mid-

night Friday—lots of them. I'll bet General MacArthur'll be glad to hear about this. Don't you think it would be thrilling to go down to the docks Friday night and watch them leave!"





**At the Friendship Cafe** the manicurist tells her boy friend: "A customer told me today that lots of our troopships are sailing to Australia on Friday at midnight." The shady-looking man standing next to them listens attentively. (Note bartender played by Alfred Hitchcock, center).



**The mysterious man**, whose ears were even more attentive than the manicurist's boy friend, leaves the cafe, remembering these important words: "Troopships . . . Australia . . . Friday at midnight." His business is to check all rumors, not pass them along for social conversation.



**A midnight rendezvous** is held by the mysterious man, an Axis agent, with a U-boat officer and seaman who have paddled ashore in a small rubber boat. In a dark cove, the secret military information the haberdasher so innocently revealed to his family at last reaches the enemy.



**"How does the enemy find out** about these ships?" exclaims the irate Zenith haberdasher, who habitually rejects all rumors, as his morning paper tells him what happened to the troopship aboard which was the young lieutenant who bought the dozen tropical shirts (*see opposite page*).



